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SUPPORT BY THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM OF THE EFFORTS OF GOVERNMENTS TO PROMOTE AND CONSOLIDATE NEW OR RESTORED DEMOCRACIES

MAINTENANCE OF INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Letter dated 14 March 1997 from the Permanent Representatives of Belarus and the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the joint statement, signed in Moscow on 7 March 1997, by the President of the Russian Federation, B. N. Yeltsin, and the President of the Republic of Belarus, A. G. Lukashenko, in connection with the formation on 2 April 1996 of the Association between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus (see annex).

We should be grateful if this letter and its annex were circulated as a document of the General Assembly under items 38, 81 and 99 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) A. SYCHOU
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
of the Republic of Belarus
to the United Nations

(Signed) S. LAVROV
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
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to the United Nations

* A/52/50.

ANNEX

Joint statement by the President of the Russian Federation and the President of Belarus, signed in Moscow on 7 March 1997

The formation on 2 April 1996 of the Association between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus was an historic event which elevated to a new level the process of uniting two fraternal peoples and integrating our States.

From the first days of its formation, the main task of the Association has been to ensure the rights and interests of Russian and Belarusian citizens. They have already been granted equal rights to medical assistance, education, employment, remuneration for labour and other social guarantees.

The establishment of a single customs area, work to ensure identical conditions for the functioning of the economic entities of the Russian Federation and Belarus, and the implementation of joint economic and social programmes have had an increasingly positive impact on solving the problems confronting our peoples.

The Russian Federation and Belarus have established close and trusting cooperation in the area of foreign policy. Our countries are united in their rejection of the plans to expand the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) eastward, which runs the risk of creating new dividing lines and dangerous confrontation on the continent. Having combined their efforts, the two States will continue to strive actively to bring about in Europe a system of comprehensive security that takes into account in a just manner the interests of all the members of the European family of nations.

Nevertheless, the conditions of life require that we proceed more persistently and effectively along the path of further closer relations. Russians and Belarusians quite rightly expect a considerable practical return from the work that has begun. We have no right to disappoint the expectations of our peoples and we are full of determination to take further steps to expand integration.

The Presidents of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus believe that there is a need to strengthen the legal basis for the Association and enhance the effectiveness of all its structures. To this end, plans are being made to strengthen the governing powers of the Supreme Council and the Executive Committee and clearly regulate the questions of the establishment and competence of other joint bodies.

The establishment of an effective mechanism for carrying out decisions taken by Association bodies is a measure that must now be taken. Their timely and complete implementation by all State bodies and legal and natural persons of the Russian Federation and Belarus must become an immutable rule.

At the level of State executive bodies, there is a need to establish a mechanism for cooperation which would ensure direct contacts between their

leaders in dealing with issues that are of mutual interest as well as an ongoing exchange of current information.

The Presidents will assume direct control over the measures to enhance the effectiveness of the activities of the inter-State bodies that have been and are being established.

The unification of the two countries' legislation is considered a top-priority task. The Parliamentary Assembly, which is not sufficiently effective today, is to play an important role in carrying out that task. In order to establish a fully developed legal basis for integration, a procedure must be set up whereby laws adopted by the Assembly within the framework of its competence are incorporated by the Parliaments of the two States members into their legal systems in a manner that would ensure their entry into force as speedily as possible.

In the economic field, we consider it necessary to create equal organizational and economic conditions for the economic entities of the two States and for conducting a coordinated structural policy. To these ends, particular attention is to be given to implementing a jointly prepared programme for synchronizing economic reforms.

A set of measures aimed at ensuring the most favourable conditions for the priority development of trade and the unimpeded movement of goods, services, capital and manpower is to be drawn up and implemented. In order to achieve this, the foundation for a single normative legal basis is to be laid by the end of 1997, chiefly by developing general norms as well as unifying civil and customs codes and simultaneously introducing common taxation legislation.

In the area of production, joint scientific and production programmes are to be actively carried out, transnational companies are to be set up, and a plan for the coordinated development and deployment of productive capacities is to be drawn up.

Combined transport, energy and communication systems are to be formed.

A higher level of economic integration is to be achieved by conducting a common financial, credit and budget policy leading to a monetary union.

Funds allocated from the customs duties of the Russian Federation and Belarus in accordance with standards set by the Supreme Council are also to be used in establishing the Association's budget.

All this will promote the building of a single economic complex for the purpose of solving social problems.

In the social and humanitarian field, the transition to common standards in the Association's social policy is to begin in 1998 after a gradual equalization of remuneration for labour is achieved and the living standard of the population of the two States is enhanced. This, first of all, relates to allowances and entitlements for war and labour veterans, disabled persons and low-income families.

The introduction of the institution of Association citizenship, whereby all citizens of the Russian Federation and all citizens of the Republic of Belarus are also citizens of the Association, could be an effective instrument for ensuring the complete equality of Russians and Belarusians.

Bilateral humanitarian, cultural, scientific and technological and information links are to be stepped up, and the work aimed at opening information and cultural and scientific and technological centres in Moscow and Minsk is to be completed.

The Presidents of the Russian Federation and Belarus are convinced that our peoples, having set out on the path of unity, have made the correct choice for all time to come, and this will undoubtedly help to ensure the economic growth and security of the Association and enhance the well-being of our citizens.

We must act energetically and purposefully on behalf of this sacred cause.

(Signed) B. N. YELTSIN (Signed) A. G. LUKASHENKO